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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MOUNT EVERETT
STATE RESERVATION COMMISSION

FOR THE YEAR 1923

COMMISSION

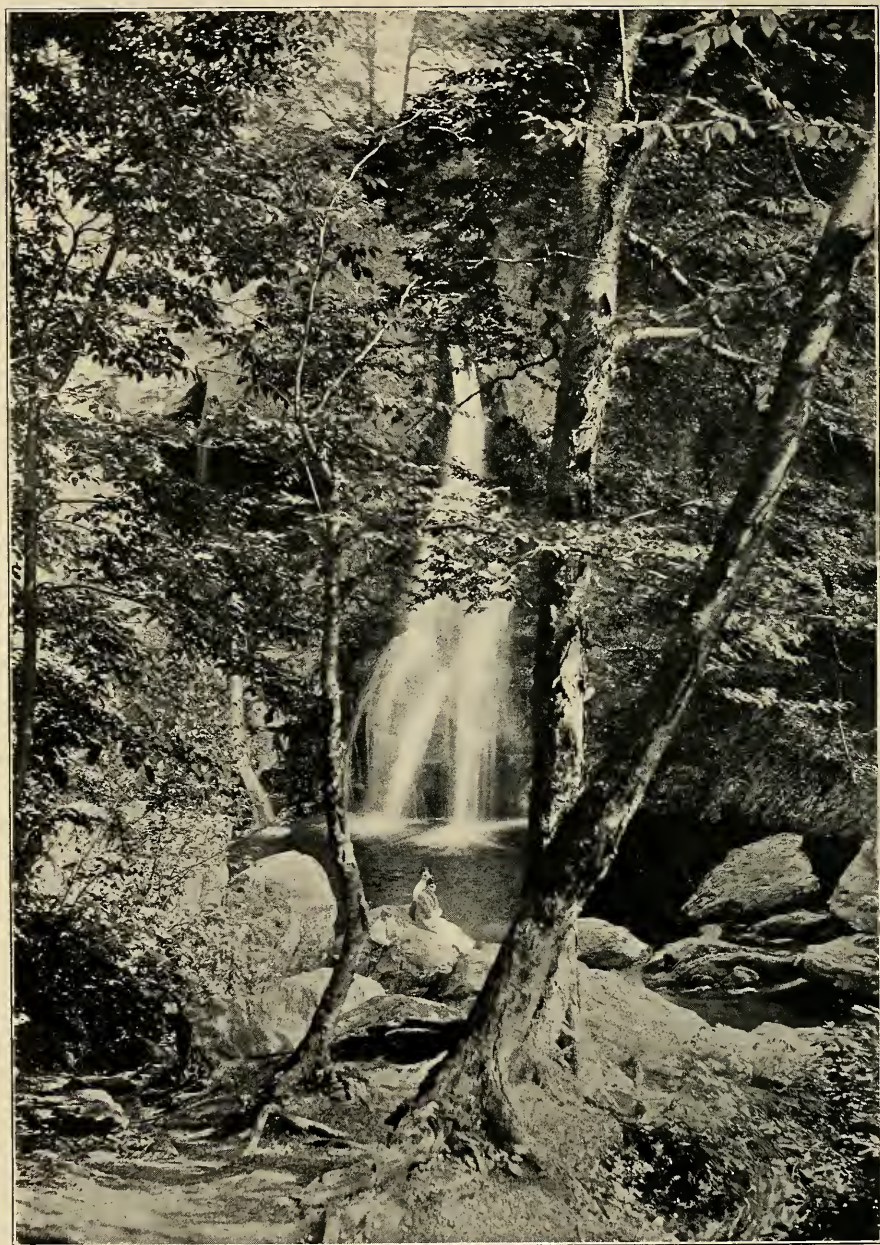
HERBERT C. JOYNER, *Chairman*

A. CHALKLEY COLLINS, *Secretary*

PETER J. TYER



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COMMISSION ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE



BASH BISH FALLS

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

REPORT OF THE MOUNT EVERETT STATE RESERVATION COMMISSION.

During the past year much work has been done in making needed repairs and improvements on the road leading from the public highway in the town of Mount Washington through the Reservation. This road leads near the shores of Lake Undine, and ends at the log cabin which is occupied by Frederick K. Shears, the Observer in charge of the fire tower on the summit of The Dome. There is a large parking place near this cabin, and from this an easy trail made last year leads to the summit. On the road leading up to the Lake a short piece of new road has been built, cutting off the "Hairpin Curve" so called and making the ascent much easier for automobiles. This work has been done under the supervision of Engineer John M. Race of Housatonic.

During the past year over three thousand visitors have climbed the tower on the summit and registered in the observation room; many more, of course, have visited the Reservation without registering. These have come from thirty-eight different states of the Union, and with representatives from eleven foreign countries.

This Reservation is located in the extreme southwest corner of the State, and contains over eight hundred acres. Its principal feature is The Dome, the second highest peak in Massachusetts, with an elevation of 2,624 feet above sea level. Far up on the mountain side is Lake Undine, and it has many other attractive features for the lover of nature in its wild state.

The beautiful Twin Lakes in Connecticut, the fertile valleys, and distant villages are seen as you climb the mountain sides. From the lofty observation tower located on the bald summit of the Dome is seen a wonderful panorama of mountains, lakes and valleys. In the foreground are Mounts Alandar and Riga. The Catskills may be seen in the west, and on a clear day the Ashokan Reservoir has been distinguished. Mount Greylock, 40 miles to the north, can be distinguished, and even hills in Vermont and New Hampshire are seen. Prof. Hitchcock, who visited this section in his explorations of the State, writes as follows, of the Dome in his "Geology of Massachusetts":

"The central part is somewhat conical, almost naked eminence; except that, numerous yellow pines, two or three feet high, and huckleberry bushes have fixed themselves wherever the crevices of the rock afford sufficient soil. Hence the view from the summit is entirely unobstructed. And what a view!

In depth, in height, in circuit, how serene!
The spectacle, how pure — of nature's works
In earth and air,
A revelation infinite it seems.

You feel yourself to be standing above everything around you, and feel the proud consciousness of literally looking down upon all terrestrial scenes. Before you on the east, the valley through which the Housatonic wanders, stretches far northward in Massachusetts, and southward into Connecticut, sprinkled over with copse and glebe, with small sheets of water and beautiful villages. To the southeast, especially, a large sheet of water appears (Twin Lakes), of surpassing beauty. In the southwest the gigantic Alandar, Riga and other mountains more remote, seem to bear the blue heavens on their heads in calm majesty; while stretching across the far distant west, the Catskills hang like the curtains of the sky. Oh! what a glorious display of mountains all around you! And how does one in such a spot turn round and round, and drink in new glories, and feel his heart swelling more and more with emotions and sublimity, until the tired optic nerve shrinks

from its office. This certainly is the grandest prospect in Massachusetts and the first hour that one spends in such a spot is among the richest treasures that memory lays up in her storehouse."

BASH BISH FALLS.

To the west of the Mount Everett Reservation are the famous Bash Bish Falls which are located in Mount Washington and near the New York State line. The property, including about 400 acres of mountain woodland, was recently purchased from the Flagler estate by Mrs. Francis R. Masters of New York City, for the purpose of saving the falls from commercial uses, and preserving the wonderful scenic beauties of the falls and adjoining territory for future generations.

She now offers to convey this property to the State of Massachusetts for its actual cost to her. We strongly recommend the purchase of this property by the State, the same to be added to the Mount Everett Reservation or to be placed under the care of such commission as the Legislature may determine. A bill will be introduced at the coming session of the Legislature for this purpose. Action is already being taken in the State of New York with a view to establishing a large scenic park or reservation in that State and adjoining the Bash Bish property.

Clark W. Bryan in his Book of Berkshire, writes of this place:

Just opposite the perpendicular north end of Alandar, after plunging 200 feet, in all, down through a narrow gorge, whose sides tower 200 and 300 feet above, over several precipitous slopes that, taken together, are the noted Bashbish Falls; and just after the last leap of sixty feet, where the water is divided by a huge boulder on the brink, the stream turns sharp to the west, and goes dancing away to join the Hudson through a gorge made by the north end of Alandar and the south end of Cedar Mountain. Below the falls it descends 300 feet in a short distance. Into the valley of this romantic stream, from either side above the falls, come several tributary narrow valleys, which in their lower portions are narrow gorges, and to clamber through them is so difficult, and often so dangerous as to be very enticing to those of an adventurous turn of mind. A trip to the Falls is always a day's excursion, and should include a walk from the lower falls to the Eagle's Nest, to the Lookoff, and to the upper falls, and returning by the highway. When going down the road in the gorge above the falls, the Old Man of the Mountains, or Profile Rock, will be seen high up on the right. This towering head is approachable from above, and commands a magnificent view of the gorge, the Catskills and the intervening country.

Prof. Hitchcock writing of Bash Bish describes it as "the most remarkable and interesting gorge in Massachusetts."

Other noted writers and visitors are no less enthusiastic in their descriptions of the beauties of this place.

This wonderful property should certainly be added to the Reservations of the Commonwealth, and the present opportunity to purchase it at a reasonable price ought not to be lost.

Respectfully submitted,

HERBERT C. JOYNER,
A. CHALKLEY COLLINS,
PETER J. TYER,
Commissioners.

GREAT BARRINGTON, MASS., December 12, 1923.